"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES."
—RIG VEDA

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Gayatri Devi
Editor, 1955-1962

Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*

"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

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DESTINY

*by Swami Paramananda**

Destiny, I have followed Thy irresistible call
Through mountains' rocky trails and forests'
thorny paths;
I have trod deserts' burning sands and
orchards' cooling shades.
Thou hast led me through fortune's bright
ascending flights
And misfortune's uttermost depths.
I have drunk life's bitterest and sweetest cups—
All at Thy bidding.
Through Thy mysterious guiding I have known
heaven's luminous stars shedding their
unfailing luster;
Also have I wandered through misery's blackest
night.
Oft my unbending mind, ignorant of Thy
beneficent Will, hath rebelled and recoiled;
But Thou, with unshakable resolution of
transforming and upbuilding
Hast fitted me for my life.

*From his book of poems, *The Vigil*

We are That — eternal Truth. Because we imagine that it has to be experienced, realized, it remains apart from us. —*Anandamayee Ma*

We must unfeignedly believe that God is in fact within our souls; that we must worship Him and love Him and serve Him in spirit and in truth; that He sees all, and that unto Him all hearts are open, our own and those of all His creatures; that He is self-existent, whilst it is in Him that all His creatures live and move and have their being; that His perfection is infinite and sovereign, and demands the full surrender of ourselves, our souls and bodies.

—*Brother Lawrence*

So long as I do not have a knowledge of my true Self, so long as the Reality is hidden behind these outer semblances, I have a perception of many things and persons. Perfect knowledge is knowledge of oneness — of one only Reality behind the many. — *Sri Ramakrishna*

If you know Him by whom you were made, you will know yourself. The wise man participates of God. The man who is worthy of God is also a God among men.

—*Sextus the Pythagorean*

He is unseen, but seeing; unheard, but hearing; unperceived, but perceiving; unknown, but knowing. There is no other seer but He, there is no other hearer but He, there is no other perceiver but He, there is no other knower but He. This is the Self, the Ruler within, the Immortal.

—*Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*

KNOW THAT I AM GOD

by Gayatri Devi

This theme, "Know That I Am God," taken from the biblical utterance, is closely related in essence to some of the great teachings of the Upanishads. Reflecting deeply upon it one becomes aware of its having come from one source — the Supreme Source. Reasoning and elaborating on the idea, we may ask: Who is speaking; whose voice is uttering these words, "Know that I am God?" To be correct historically, we know it was the Psalmist. But was it not the voice of God speaking through him?

Relating this to the renowned sayings of the Upanishads, we can ask the same question. From these "Forest Books," which represent and reveal the most profound realizations of man, importance has been given to two great utterances: "I am Brahman (the Supreme, the Absolute)" and, "Thou art That. (Thou art the Supreme, the Absolute.)" Who is saying this? "I am the Most High!" Of course we must answer, "It is the seer, the rishi, the prophet." And who is he through whom this knowledge or revelation or perception is coming? In all simplicity and truthfulness should we not answer, "It comes from man?" It is man himself through whom this is being spoken. It is man through whom it is being stated that he himself is God; he is ultimate Reality.

Next may come the query: "Are you speaking from a dualistic or a monistic point of view?" Is it really possible to separate monism

— the belief in the One as the supreme, indivisible Reality — from what we call dualism — which sees the One divided into two or many? Can we say with certainty that these two concepts are unrelated?

Do we not read the words of Brother Lawrence side by side with the teaching of the Upanishad? We know from Brother Lawrence's book, *The Practice of the Presence of God,* that he was a pure bhakta — a devotee to the core, completely dedicated to the will of God. We cannot place him before the world as a philosopher of mighty intellect, expounding theories and doctrines. But what he has to say from his own experience is not different from what the seers of the Upanishads had to relate. He recognized, as they had, that God — Brahman, the Supreme, the Absolute, call it what we may — that the Reality, which appears to be distant, dwells in the innermost recesses of man's own being.

Therefore, to separate monism and dualism is to falsify the truth. Because we do not have adequate comprehension, we place That which is so near at hand at a great distance from us. This can only make us feel unrelated to Reality and create barriers on our path to knowledge. This must not be, and there is no reason why it should be.

When we do not have knowledge, it is safe to go by faith. (The Sanskrit word, *shraddha,* is slightly different and more comprehensive than *faith.*) If humans think they are bereft of this basic faith it is impossible for them to proceed in any kind of investigation which would eventu-

ally lead to realization, to actual perception of Reality. If you do not know, then you must trust in the word, the discovery of someone who has known. For this reason the first prerequisite of a seeker is humility and faith. If one is to be led to the source of knowledge through the instrumentality of a human being, he must have faith in that human being. This is also what is meant by "having faith in the scriptures." We must believe in the seers; we must trust those who have become the knowers.

You may say to me, "I don't want to trust anybody; I only want to trust myself." If you are strong enough and have your own conviction, you cannot go wrong in trusting yourself. But first find out to what extent you can do so. Are you not often deluded, confused? Do you not, in your thinking and analysis and mental grasp of things, suffer from lack of understanding? Where then do you gain this assurance? You do not want to go to anyone else to find out the truth; you want to discover it all by yourself. The fact is that even the greatest who have actually realized the truth without any dependence on or assistance from other human beings will tell you that in a certain stage of spiritual life, though in a sense you do not need the dependence upon a person, still you require the assistance of a knower. We cannot even consider a subject like this without being aware that we are able to do so only because someone before us has known. No one should take the position to begin with that he is the supreme knower. Humility comes first.

"Be still and know that I am God." God is saying, "If you want to know Me, then be still." If it is our interpretation that God is saying this, then man has to become alert, awake. He must pay heed to that voice and follow the instruction. There is so little practice of stillness, and so incomplete is the practice even when it is used that many miss reaching the state of knowing God — who and what He is.

The real teachers of India make it very clear that no one can really fulfill his obligation to this commandment, "Be still and know that I am God," unless he goes through a prescribed way of life, a definite process and discipline. The road to realization is not easy. So much conflict comes because this very wonderful teaching can be read and studied, comprehended and cherished intellectually, because it can bring to one's mind great stimulation and a sense of freedom. But intellect is only the tool by which to comprehend.

To know, you have to transcend the intellect. That is why Sri Ramakrishna said that to gain this knowledge, to know God, to know that you are the Supreme, you really do not need book learning. This rings true. What you know spiritually is not determined by what you have read and understood with your mind. Something must be added and this adding is contained in those two words, "be still." To come to the knowledge which is realization, empirical knowledge, experience, man must go through the process of silencing himself, silencing the man, before he can see God or prove that he is God.

This is at the core of every religion, every type of true teaching — teaching that you and I cannot alter because we think we know a little bit better or because it does not quite suit our temperament. How blind, how egotistic we are when we say that a certain type of philosophy is for a given age and era; that it cannot be for our times; that we need something else, something different. When we are dealing with principles inherent in existence, in the universe, in ourself, we find them to be inviolate; they cannot be changed. It is for man to understand them, so that he can make use of them. You cannot say that in our time we cannot deal with biblical sayings or the philosophy of the Upanishads, that we can appreciate them only by keeping them on a high shelf. I will challenge you: "Bring down what you are keeping on your high shelf! Make it a principle in your life. Use it and see whether it will bear some result or not!"

In today's world, so very conscious of tribulation, of warfare and every kind of disturbance, to what are we going to hold? What will keep us safe, steady and tranquil so that we shall not be swept off our balance with the masses who are affected by panic, fear and ignorance? Have we at any time in human history been able to alter the working of the cosmic causes of dissolution, of change and growth? No, we have not. Therefore, the one who knows the truth is always the witness; and he is the best participant of the very law that governs existence, though he is never caught in its whirlpool. This

is the essence of our philosophy. If we are earnest followers of truth, we shall learn in time that we can be the witness of life only by becoming the knower of its Source.

If we know who we are and what we are, what our true affiliation is, if we know that we are That and have actually realized the meaning of such an utterance, we have nothing to fear. Life does not bind us and death does not frighten us. This perspective is essential today. We cannot be like a herd of sheep, led by ignorance and fear and all that is of a low order. Knowledge should lead us; understanding, enlightenment should guide us. We may well say, "Where are we going to get it?" We look to the men who are the leaders of our world and say, "Why can't they give it to us?" There is only one who can really guide us and that is He who dwells within ourselves.

This is monism at its peak. If we cannot turn to that wise voice, that sustaining spirit, that indwelling Existence, if we cannot affiliate ourselves with that Witness within, then we shall be caught as in a whirlpool. Our security and protection lie in the awareness of That, and it cannot be had superficially by reading a few books or attending a few lectures. It is involved in our very way of life, and that way must include the practice of stillness from which comes a growing knowledge that there is a supreme Reality, Self-existent, unalterable, imperishable, and that we are not only part of It, we *are* It.

This is what we should meditate upon when the world news becomes frightening — not on

the news. We do not realize how our minds are caught in our fears and apprehensions. Even those who have the habit of meditation must beware of their subject. We must not allow the mind to revolve around all the forces of disturbance which can undermine our true relation in life, our identification with the real. Who and what is real? Who is God? What is God? Can we by some kind of superficial religion sustain ourselves? Do we not need direct assurance, tangible support? Should we not depend upon something that is not going to fail us? This can come only when we are able to silence all the confusion of emotion, all the ways of the mind and all the struggles of the intellect.

"Be still and know that I am God." Come to a state of utter stillness in which you know who it is that you are, who it is that "I am." If you are a dualist, you will say this is God speaking. The monist will say, "I am speaking." Find out who you are. "Who am I?" This was in the heart of a very great soul, a contemporary saint, Ramana Maharshi. He led his followers by telling them to ask themselves the question: "Who am I?" Here is practical teaching. It will lead to realization. Who are you? All that you are in the world of men is secondary to what you are in the sight of God, in your relation with the Supreme. When you have reached the point where what is primary has its definite influence on you and what is secondary plays its part, keeping its own place, then you have really begun your spiritual life. Into our everyday life we have to bring this higher awareness. Can we do

it? "I am not a seer," you may say; "I am not a prophet nor a very great soul. I am just myself." Of course you are yourself. But you do not have any right to deny your own divinity. We are so very ignorant, so caught in our confusions. The type of faith we need is not merely faith in our own powers and abilities and achievements, but faith in That which makes all our accomplishments, our every expression possible.

This faith does not have to have a name. We need not call it Vedanta or Christianity or anything else. Let us take the cloak off the truth, set aside labels; let us not compare coverings and think, "This is good, this is bad, this right, this wrong." We must come to the essential truth. It is to be found in religion, in philosophy, in the universe, in life itself. You will find it where you can touch it, within yourself.

In our search and aspiration for the highest we are all one. We cannot divide the universe or any of its parts from the Universal. As we move toward the Soul, the Reality, all the outer trimmings and superimpositions become less and less important. We move away from all distinctions of country, caste and creed. There is no difference between a seer who lived five thousand years ago and a prophet who voiced truth three thousand years ago or some enlightened soul who may appear on our earth today. It is the same life, the same voice, the same reality seeking expression in the immediate manifestation. Therefore, we can take the teaching of the Upanishads or the Bible or whatever we choose; it does not matter. What does matter is that it

becomes an effective force within our own existence.

If we have even an inkling of what it is that dwells in us, all our arrogance will be transmuted into humility. The man who knows the One, who is experienced, does not go about beating on brass, as it were, saying, "Here! See me! I have found it!" Rather he lives silently; his influence is a silent one — but very powerful. Today's world would be greatly benefited if all of us who share these ideals would try earnestly to live our spiritual life, each according to his own natural faith, thereby not adding confusion to confusion, fear to fear, but carrying the stillness that leads to Self-knowledge.

Stillness is produced from Self. This is the force we must create. This is what we should give to one another. But it cannot be done unless we enter into what Jesus spoke of as the "closet" of our own being, unless we have some form of inner life in which our spirit and the Supreme really meet. In that place of union is harmony and a sense of oneness, of wholeness.

"Know that I am God." Each one of us has a personal spiritual responsibility in the matter of gaining this knowledge. Know that you are God. *Know* that there is only One and that you are an inseparable part of that One. Learn to be still, to go within. Make time for this communion. Then only will the result come. And the result belongs not merely to you. You will share it; and by giving and sharing this form of blessing and benediction you will be blessed a thousandfold.

BE CHRIST-LIKE

by Swami Paramananda

God manifests in the form of a man that man may comprehend what God is. The Absolute is declared to be unknowable and unthinkable, hence He is beyond the reach of the human mind. But to make it possible for man to understand Him, He assumes personal aspects and comes as a Christ or a Buddha. This is what is meant by a divine Incarnation. Such a manifestation serves as the connecting link between God and man. He is divine enough to be in touch with God and human enough to be in touch with man, so that man may realize divine things through Him.

To truly grasp what an Incarnation is, however, we must have like qualities and show them forth in our lives. The words and actions of a great teacher no one can wholly understand until he has risen to the same plane of spiritual consciousness. When we have the same thing in us that was in Christ or in Buddha, then it is possible for us to comprehend what they taught. Until then, what they say and do must remain a closed chapter. We can never draw the picture of a great being either to satisfy ourselves or others until we have the same qualities. One who speaks of Christ must himself be Christ-like in his life, love and wisdom, else his words will carry but little weight. When our inner being becomes attuned with the Supreme then alone can we express Him in our words and actions. That is why all the divine seers unanimously declare the absolute need of the practical application of spiritual teaching.

To the majority the Christ-consciousness or the direct perception of Truth seems something unattainable. But that cannot be. What has happened once will happen again. What has been done can be done: that is the law. The purpose of a divine Incarnation is not merely to manifest His superhuman and miraculous powers, but to point out to mankind by His life and example the goal of existence and man's divine birthright. Saviors do not come to proclaim things which are impossible for man to attain. No, we think them impossible because we do not try to practice them, so our religion degenerates into a blind and thoughtless acceptance of certain fixed forms and doctrines.

The purpose of the life and teaching of a great Savior is to open man's eyes to his own higher Self, to awaken more love for God than for mundane things; or in other words, to make a mortal feel conscious of his immortal nature. In order to gain this consciousness and make it a part of our being we must learn to practice the Christ-ideal in our everyday life. We must picture it. We must make it living to our heart. We must feel its reality. As we cultivate this habit of feeling the living Presence within, our vision will become more and more open to subtle spiritual facts, which otherwise remain vague and unreal. People's sight varies. Things which we may see plainly are not visible to the blind man; so in the days of our inner blindness, we cannot see God or understand His manifestations. With most people the spiritual life is a matter of theory. They have just a little intel-

lectual grasp of it; that is quite enough for them. But practice is the whole of it and not having practical experience in religion, we can never penetrate the inner depths of anything.

One man may go to church, pray and sing hymns in the name of Jesus, appearing righteous, but this cannot make him spiritual or bring him blessing so long as he does not manifest the teaching in his life; there may be another who never goes to a church or utters the name of Christ, but who, through the practice of holiness and purity, so embodies and radiates the Christ-spirit that he becomes a living symbol of the Christ-life. Such a soul alone truly honors Him and proves a worthy follower. As it is said in one of the Buddhist sacred books: "Now it is not thus, Ananda, that the Tathagata (Incarnate One) is rightly honored, reverenced, venerated, held sacred and revered. But the brother or the sister, the devout man or the devout woman, who continually fulfills all the greater and the lesser duties, who is correct in life, walking according to the precepts, it is he who rightly honors, reverences, venerates, holds sacred and reveres the Incarnate One with the worthiest homage."

We do not honor our Savior by merely belonging to a creed founded in His name or by offering Him lip-praise. Only as we learn to shape our lives after the model of His own do we show ourselves worthy of Him; and this can be done only by living His teachings.

RELIGION AND HUMAN RELATIONS

by Sister Daya

(CONTINUED FROM THE FALL ISSUE)

The man who claims that he has religious illumination and at the same time is petty, cold, selfish and vindictive has never even known the meaning of the word "religion."

Once the Lord Buddha came to a village where there was a sect of Fire worshippers at whose head was a man of great power by the name of Kassapa. Throughout the countryside he was looked upon as a master and a leader and was accustomed to receive the homage of the devotees. Therefore, when he beheld the Lord Buddha and noted how his beauty and wisdom and calm strength were attracting the populace, he felt full of envy and said to himself: "The Lord Gautama is no doubt a great teacher, but he is not holy like me."

Later the Buddha met him face to face and said to him: "In your heart are there not these thoughts, 'The Lord Gautama is no doubt a great teacher but he is not holy like me'?" Overwhelmed and amazed, the man covered his face with his hands and admitted that such had been his feelings. "My son," said the Buddha, "so long as there is envy in the heart there can be no spiritual enlightenment. Thou art not holy, Kassapa; thou hast not yet entered the path."

Envy is the mark of the separated self and one of the most difficult tendencies for a man to overcome. Yet that is what the master spirits have in mind for us when they bid us to be clean and pure and true in soul and body.

We must become consecrated. That is what the spiritual life means. It is an attitude that can prevail in the home or in the cloister. It makes holy all one's relationships by causing us to sense the actual presence of the Godhead in our midst. How opposed to this is our modern attitude — the attitude of many young people, for instance, toward idealism in life and conduct. Often we detect a hard and cynical note in what they say. If you try to bring in another point of view, they remark: "Oh, we are realists. We are looking at these things with open eyes. We are not fooling ourselves!" Are they not? Their open eyes may not be so open as they believe. True realism does not consist merely in saying, "That is a table, and this is a chair, and death means decay, and that is all there is." That is not realism. The genuine realistic viewpoint is that which can perceive the abiding in the midst of the changing, that can see life in the face of death, and can know death merely as a change of form.

When people have this more profound vision they naturally express harmony. Harmony comes when we begin to be aware of our place in the whole; when we move in rhythm with the whole and do not set our own little will against it. When men act alone without this awareness, they defeat the very ends for which they seem to strive.

It is as if the keys of the piano should rebel and each one declare its independence, saying, "What have I to do with this music that is being played? What have I to do with Brahms and

Beethoven, with Schubert or Schumann, or any of these masters? I am going to do just what I please!''

An odd illustration, perhaps, but it conveys a true picture of our mentality, when we wander around unrelated to the music of which we are a part. The wise among the keys (and among men) realize what the symphony means, realize that true greatness and fulfillment can come only as they mingle their notes with all those other notes, at the will of the player. Then instead of feeling, ''My identity is lost in this great union of sound!'' they say, ''Look what is coming from my heart—this mighty symphony, this sublime concerto!''

We are really like that, like notes of music, and the significance of our being has to be realized in the depths of our heart. It is essential for us to dream, to meditate, to have reverence for life, reverence for all the expressions of life. It is in this way alone that we can go beyond the surface appearance of things and express, at least partially, that variation of the Golden Rule found in the Bhagavad-Gita, a variation which if applied generally in human life would do away with all conflict and misery: ''He who can look upon pleasure and pain everywhere with the same regard as when they are applied to himself, that Yogi is highly esteemed.''

There is a story in the Buddhist scriptures. It is about a king who having fallen in love with the beautiful wife of a rich merchant contrived to have the husband arrested on a false charge and ultimately condemned to death. Moved by a

cruel instinct, he ordered a seat to be placed for him so that he could witness the execution, but as the axe was about to fall, the darkness suddenly was lifted from his heart and for a fleeting moment, he felt himself to be one with the victim. "Hold, executioner! Hold!" he cried. "It is the king you are slaying!"

Happily we do not all have to pass through such an ordeal in order to have our eyes opened to the underlying truth; but we do have to turn inward, we do have to sense within ourselves the greater life native to all.

Every human being is a mystery and a marvel. If we could learn to look with spiritual vision upon even the most stupid, the most unprepossessing, and realize the being in him as one with the being in us, suddenly he would not appear dull and stupid and uninteresting any more. The great saviors had this sight. That is why they were saviors. From the Buddhist *Psalms of the Brethren* come two examples of this deeper vision:

It is written that when Gautama Buddha was on earth there were two brothers who entered the order under his rule and guidance. One of these brothers was alert, and quick to learn, the other was a very simple soul and slow to grasp the meaning of the meditations and the teaching. To everyone it seemed that he was a failure and even his brother came to him and said, "You do not belong here. You must get out." None of them saw his heart and the yearning and devotion that was there for the Master. They just

made fun of him till, miserable, broken-hearted and rejected, he sat to one side with the tears rolling down his cheeks.

Just then the Blessed One came that way and seating himself beside the unhappy monk, asked him, "Brother, what troubles you?" Forthwith he opened his heart to the Buddha, telling him of his desire to learn, his apparent inability to do so, his grief at the thought of leaving. The Buddha went away for a moment and returned carrying a pure white cloth which he gave to the monk. "My son," he said gently, "make your mind like this white cloth and all the truths will be manifest to you."

It was like teaching a child with blocks. Suddenly the monk saw revealed the basic truth that his mind was in his own keeping; therefore, if he could keep it pure and unsoiled by the world, all would be revealed to him.

It takes a great teacher to reach down thus to the low and the humble and the lost. The little teachers cannot do it.

The other story concerned a young woman, the daughter of rich and powerful parents, who fell in love with a servant in her father's household and went away with him. They traveled to a distant village and lived there as man and wife for some years, in great poverty. A child was born to them, but when the second child was almost due, the wife pleaded that they go back to her father and mother. She felt that under the circumstances they would forgive her and her husband and grant them their blessing.

So the whole little family started on their pilgrimage, going by foot, as they could not afford a conveyance. It was a difficult journey and when they were about halfway, the wife realized that she could go no further, as her baby was about to be born. At the same time, a severe tropical storm broke over them. The rain fell in sheets and torrents, and the husband, fearful for his wife, went to gather boughs and reeds to make a shelter for her. But as he reached into a pile of brush, a deadly snake bit him on the hand and within a few minutes he was dead.

The wife, alone except for the little daughter, gave birth to her babe, but agonized with fear for her husband, she left the baby with the little girl and started to drag herself along the river bank in the direction her husband had taken. Suddenly she heard a cry, and turning, saw her daughter slip into the swift-flowing waters of the river, swollen by the rain. The next moment, the baby, lying unguarded, was carried off by a great eagle. Dazed, sick and exhausted, the mother was able gradually to make her way to her home village, only to enter into more confusion. Look as she would, she could not find her old home. Finally she asked someone to direct her, upon which she was told that a few days before, the house had burned to the ground and that the whole family had perished in the flames.

On hearing this, the poor woman became utterly demented. From then on, she used to go around the streets half clothed, her hair disheveled, her garments torn, not knowing any-

thing. She became a byword in the village where she was known as the "little mad one." The children used to chase her and throw gravel and stones at her and she lived only by means of the scraps of food she managed to pick up here and there.

Then came a great day, the mighty teacher, the Buddha, the Awakened One, had sent word that he was coming to the village and would speak to them all in the *maidan,* which was something like a village green. People flocked from far and near. There were devotees and village headmen, men of all ranks gathered in one great body to greet the Blessed One.

Finally he arrived with his disciples, but as he stood there in his yellow robe, gazing out over the sea of faces, suddenly there was a disturbance on the outer fringes of the crowd. Then someone cried, "It is the little mad one;" and someone else said, "Do not let her come near the Lord!" And then everyone shouted, "Push her out! Get her out!" But the Lord Buddha said, "Suffer her to come to me." The crowd drew back to let her pass and he waited as she approached; then he spoke very quietly: "My child," he said, "recover your reason!" Instantly the love that flowed from him cleared her mind. She became aware of her surroundings, of the vast assemblage, and finally, with shame, of her half clothed condition; but at once one of the monks threw his cloak about her and led her away from the throng. From that time on, her way was clear, and ultimately she became a great nun in the women's order.

The great ones are spoken of as "Lords of compassion." Christ was a Lord of compassion, Buddha was a Lord of compassion, and we too in our own small way can be Lords of compassion. What is compassion? It is being in that state that the king was in when he cried: "It is the king that you slay!" It is indeed the King that we slay — the one King! It is the King that is hungry and naked and friendless and forlorn; and we are the King!

I remember an incident something like the above that happened right at our California Ashrama in connection with Swami Paramananda.

Someone brought to one of the public services a patient from a mental hospital nearby. She was a young woman and her frenzied condition seemed comparable to that which afflicted the people whom the Gospels describe as being possessed of a devil. Those who were responsible for her hoped that she might find healing in the Temple, but from the moment the Swami started to speak she grew more and more restless, until they were forced to take her outside. There she insisted on lying down on one of the benches in the patio and when her attendant came near her she kicked him and tried to bite him and started to scream, and all this was still going on when the service came to an end.

The Swami, coming out of the Temple, walked straight over toward her, though one of his students tried to hold him back. Unhesitatingly he came right up to her and spoke to her and in-

stantly her struggles ceased. The tears started to roll down her cheeks, but she talked perfectly rationally and clung to his hand and looked up into his eyes. I felt very blessed to have been there to witness it. Such power to enter the hearts of others is the mark of those who have that inner sense of the oneness of life. It is something that no one can imitate.

How can we have that deep and wonderful awareness which is our heritage, if we stand aloof, with our ego sticking up in the universe like a sore thumb. If we would enjoy the fulness of being, then we must realize that the meaning of life is not revealed by pitting our selfhood against our brother's; not in grabbing for ourselves, not in asserting our little "I," but in feeling with Sri Krishna and Sri Ramakrishna and all the great ones what the Christ so simply expressed: "Not I but the Father worketh in me."

We are happy, we are rich, we are loving; we are compassionate, good friends, good neighbors, good relations only to the extent that we liberate in our hearts that divine spirit which *is* all these attributes and qualities by virtue of its infinite reality. Therefore, although hunger for realization may cause us to withdraw somewhat from the outer swirl of life, that does not mean that we are withdrawing from life or love or the human relationships. Spiritual life is always an expansion, never a contraction. It is to become "all things to all men."

Would not our life here on earth be better,

would not the whole human problem be less complicated if people lived in a sweeter way, if they sought some of their joys within rather than without? The Bhagavad-Gita states very emphatically that he whose joy is within, whose pleasure is within, whose light is within, he is a truly happy and illumined man.

Let us ask ourselves: "How much of our joy and our light and our life comes from within?" Are we not too often like blind men reaching for a spark from outside to make bright our darkness? The Vedanta philosophy teaches us, however, to look for our light deeper and deeper within where all is light, all is fire, all is beauty, because there dwells that ever shining One.

Many years ago I read a poem, written by Anna Hempstead Branch, an American poet who was also a mystic. The title I recall; it was "Monk in the Kitchen," and the meaning abides although the words are largely gone. The gist of it was that the monk saw his kitchen and all that it contained, transformed. "Earthen bowl and iron pot," he asks, "who are ye?" And then he himself reveals that all we touch and handle, no matter how commonplace it may seem, has its counterpart in the inner world. Everything goes back to spirit. The outer form is just the crust, the shell, the rind, but inwardly it is all divine, all beauty, all life. Thus as one cooks a meal and moves this pan or that, one deals with spirit-substance and bright presences move with one.

In truth we now know that in the bowl or pot every atom is a part of that shimmering veil which makes up our bodies and all bodies and,

itself concealed, serves to conceal the infinitely subtle. And so the monk as he does his cleaning and his scrubbing, sings:

"Whoever makes a thing more bright
Is an angel of all light.
Therefore I haste to spread abroad
The beautiful cleanness of my Lord!"

Carry that thought, that attitude. Make the Lord living—in your kitchen, in your home, wherever you go. Feel that you behold Him in and through all things, deep hidden, perhaps, but still there. Behold Him in the human beings around you; through their eyes see the One Spirit shining. Be a friend to your fellow creatures; only thus will you be a good Christian, a good Vedantist, a good Buddhist — or whatever Ideal you aspire to be — and more, you will be glorified.

In the final consummation of human endeavor we may pass beyond anything we now know or can imagine. But this is truth, that whatever summit is to be attained, we can reach it only through the world that we live in here and now —through our human relationships, through the right and understanding performance of our duties.

The Supreme Self on account of Its being of the nature of exceeding Bliss, does not admit of the distinction of the knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge. It alone shines.

— *Sri Sankaracharya*

A MEETING WITH THE POET

*by Lady Elizabeth J. Paw Tun**

It was in the year 1915 that I first came to know something of the Poet, Rabindranath Tagore. One day while browsing in a book shop I found his *Gitanjali.* Just a glance and I knew that book must be mine. Since that time it has always been one of my most treasured possessions — even to the point that when I had to evacuate from Rangoon to India in January 1942 because of the Japanese invasion and had to fly out on only a few hours notice with limited baggage (a thirty pound suitcase), I chose to take Swami Paramananda's *Book of Daily Thoughts and Prayers* and *Gitanjali.*

In September of 1916 I went to live with an aunt and uncle who had just built a new home on the estate of the Theosophical Society at Krotona in Hollywood and began teaching in a private school in Santa Monica.

Quite soon after I was settled I saw in the newspaper that the Bengali Poet, Rabindranath Tagore, would be in Los Angeles and give a lecture at which he would read some of his unpublished poems. I determined to hear him and secured my ticket to the afternoon's affair early — in fact before he had arrived in Los Angeles.

Imagine my surprise and even apprehension on returning from my school duties the day before this lecture to learn from my aunt that Mr. Pearson, Tagore's private secretary had telephoned and wanted me to call him back as soon as I came in.

*Extracts from her letters to Gayatri Devi

With mixed feelings of curiosity, excitement and wonder I telephoned to Mr. Pearson who told me that Sir Rabindranath Tagore (at that time he had not renounced his title) would like to see me and could I come at noon the next day. He gave me the address of a private school for girls on the outskirts of Los Angeles, and not the hotel where the Poet was officially staying. It was explained to me that he had found hotel life in the midst of the city not to his liking. He sought the peace and quiet that the organized life of such a school could give him.

Naturally, I wondered how this special privilege and great opportunity had come to me, "out of the blue," it seemed. As I thought about it I began to see behind it the hand of "Ganu" — a young Indian friend of mine in Berkeley where I lived and worked before coming to Hollywood. For I remembered that he used to tell me stories of his childhood days in his old ancestral house in Calcutta and of the friendship that existed between Tagore's family and his own. (Many years later I was privileged to visit this very old home in Calcutta, with its inner courtyard and the marble temple where the family worshipped, and to meet Ganu's wife and children.)

Promptly at noon of the next day I was greeted by Mr. Pearson, the secretary, who told me in words to this effect, that as the Poet was to have his public lecture that afternoon and they were eager for him to have peace and quiet before it, would I only stay about three minutes with him. Impressed with the required brevity

of my meeting, I entered a room and found myself alone. As I was wondering just how I could pay my respects and gracefully leave the room in three minutes, curtains at the back parted and the Poet entered. Dressed very simply in a white robe, with his long beautiful, silvery hair brushed back from his brow and his flowing white beard, he had such a look of majesty that I was very much overwhelmed and confused, wondering what I could possibly say to one who seemed like one of the old prophets or patriarchs who had walked right out of the Old Testament of the Bible. Graciously and in a low clear voice I heard the Poet asking me to sit down, motioning to a sofa. He sat at a table opposite, preparatory to being served his simple midday meal. He said that there were some things he wished to talk over with me and as he talked he went on eating his food. It was all so naturally done that I was very soon put at my ease and I completely forgot about the "three minute warning" I had been given.

He began to talk to me about the Indian students at Berkeley and told me that they had requested him to see me personally as a mark of appreciation and thanks for the interest I had taken in them and their problems. This opened the way for me to tell him how deep my interest in India and her struggles had become; how I had, through them, become interested in Vedanta and the work of the Society in America; of my meeting with Lala Lajpat Rai and the encouragement he had given me to go out to India where he thought I might find useful

work to do, perhaps under the guidance of the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress. It must have struck the Poet as being very vague, very visionary and very enthusiastic, for he responded with a warning. He told me how western people, many women, with feelings similar to mine had gone out to India and had become very homesick because they had found conditions so different from what they imagined and had eventually left, disappointed, disillusioned and often with distorted views primarily because they had not carried with them the right kind of understanding or spirit.

We talked, or rather, he talked and I listened with rapt interest until he finally rose from the table and I got up to depart. Then he came toward me and said in a gentle voice words to this effect: that, if I still desired to go to India and it worked out for me to go, I should come to Santiniketan where I would be most welcome to teach in his school and stay as long as necessary until other matters were settled for me.

My gratitude for this welcome offer overwhelmed me again and I do not know what I said or how I made my departure — probably in utter silence. My first conscious thought on leaving was that the three minutes had stretched out to thirty-five, and I felt very guilty as I took my leave of Mr. Pearson.

As I left the building to go home I had a strange experience, one I had never had before nor have I since. I seemed to be in a different world, for everything seemed to be a phantom, quite unreal, insignificant and like a dream. It

was only after I got home that I began to realize how tremendous had been the impact upon me of being in the presence of such a great soul. This influence only gradually waned away and I was back in my normal everyday attitudes. I always think of the experience in words that the Poet has written and that apply as well to other precious moments of my life:

"... thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life."

A final word I want to add to the Tagore event: It is one of the few deep regrets of my life that I never visited Santiniketan, although I have known students from there and read all I could about it.

If the sound of his steps does not wake me, do not try to rouse me, I pray. I wish not to be called from my sleep by the clamorous choir of birds, by the riot of wind at the festival of morning light. Let me sleep undisturbed even if my lord comes of a sudden to my door.

Ah, my sleep, precious sleep, which only waits for his touch to vanish. Ah, my closed eyes that would open their lids only to the light of his smile when he stands before me like a dream emerging from the darkness of sleep.

Let him appear before my sight as the first of all lights and all forms. The first thrill of joy to my awakened soul let it come from his glance. And let my return to myself be immediate return to him. — *Tagore*

THE YOGA OF DETACHMENT

*by Mahatma Gandhi**

The object of the Gita appears to me to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realization. That which is to be found, more or less clearly, spread out here and there in Hindu religious books has been brought out in the clearest possible language in the Gita even at the risk of repetition.

That matchless remedy is renunciation of fruits of action.

This is the center round which the Gita is woven. This renunciation is the central sun, round which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets. The body has been likened to a prison. There must be action where there is a body. Not one embodied body is exempted from labor. And yet all religions proclaim that it is possible for man, by treating the body as the temple of God, to attain freedom. Every action is tainted, be it ever so trivial. How can the body be made the temple of God? In other words, how can one be free of action, i.e., from the taint of sin? The Gita has answered the question in decisive language: "By desireless action; by renouncing fruits of action; by dedicating all activities to God, i.e., by surrendering oneself to Him body and soul."

But desirelessness or renunciation does not come for the mere talking about it. It is not attained by an intellectual feat. It is attainable only by a constant heart-churn. Right knowledge

*From his "The Message of The Gita" first published in *Young India* in 1931 and subsequently in *The Gita According to Gandhi*, by Mahadev Desai, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1946

is necessary for attaining renunciation. Learned men possess a knowledge of a kind. They may recite the Vedas from memory, yet they may be steeped in self-indulgence. In order that knowledge may not run riot, the author of the Gita has insisted on devotion accompanying it and has given it the first place. Knowledge without devotion will be like a misfire. Therefore, says the Gita, "Have devotion, and knowledge will follow." This devotion is not mere lip-worship, it is a wrestling with death. Hence the Gita's assessment of the devotee's qualities is similar to that of the sage's.

Thus the devotion required by the Gita is no soft-hearted effusiveness. It certainly is not blind faith. The devotion of the Gita has the least to do with externals. A devotee may use, if he likes, rosaries, forehead marks, make offerings, but these things are no test of his devotion. He is the devotee who is jealous of none, who is a fount of mercy, who is without egotism, who is selfless, who treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery, who is ever forgiving, who is always contented, whose resolutions are firm, who has dedicated mind and soul to God, who causes no dread, who is not afraid of others, who is free from exultation, sorrow and fear, who is pure, who is versed in action and yet remains unaffected by it, who renounces all fruit, good or bad, who treats friend and foe alike, who is untouched by respect or disrespect, who is not puffed up by praise, who does not go under when people speak ill of him, who loves silence and solitude, who has a disciplined rea-

son. Such devotion is inconsistent with the existence at the same time of strong attachments.

We thus see that to be a real devotee is to realize oneself. Self-realization is not something apart. One rupee can purchase for us poison or nectar, but knowledge or devotion cannot buy us either salvation or bondage. These are not media of exchange. They are themselves the thing we want. In other words, if the means and the end are not identical, they are almost so. The extreme of means is salvation. Salvation of the Gita is perfect peace.

But such knowledge and devotion, to be true, have to stand the test of renunciation of fruits of action. Mere knowledge of right and wrong will not make one fit for salvation. According to common notions, a mere learned man will pass as a pandit. He need not perform any service. He will regard it as bondage even to lift a little *lota* (water pot).

Or take bhakti. The popular notion of bhakti is soft-heartedness, telling beads and the like, and disdaining to do even a loving service, lest the telling of beads might be interrupted. This bhakti, therefore, leaves the rosary only for eating, drinking and the like, never for grinding corn or nursing patients.

But the Gita says: "No one has attained his goal without action. If even I were lazy to cease working, the world would perish. How much more necessary for the people at large to engage in action?"

While on the one hand it is beyond dispute that all action binds, on the other hand it is

equally true that all living beings have to do some work, whether they will or no. Here all activity, whether mental or physical, is to be included in the term action. Then how is one to be free from the bondage of action, even though he may be acting?

The manner in which the Gita has solved the problem is to my knowledge unique. The Gita says: "Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit — be detached and work — have no desire for reward and work."

This is the unmistakable teaching of the Gita. He who gives up all action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto, and the capacity for it. He, who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfillment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action.

Again let no one consider renunciation to mean want of fruit for the renouncer. The Gita reading does not warrant such a meaning. Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit. As a matter of fact he who renounces reaps a thousandfold. The renunciation of the Gita is the acid test of faith. He who is ever brooding over result often loses nerve in the performance of his duty. He becomes impatient and then gives vent to anger and begins to do unworthy things; he jumps from action to action never remaining faithful at any. He who broods

over results is like a man given to objects of senses; he is ever distracted, he says goodbye to all scruples, everything is right in his estimation and he therefore resorts to means fair and foul to attain his end.

From bitter experience of desire for fruit the author of the Gita discovered the path of renunciation of fruit and put it before the world in a most convincing manner. The common belief is that religion is always opposed to material good. "One cannot act religiously in mercantile and such other matters. There is no place for religion in such pursuits; religion is only for attainment of salvation," we hear many worldly-wise people say. In my opinion the author of the Gita has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line of demarcation between salvation and worldly pursuits. On the contrary he has shown that religion must rule even our worldly pursuits. I have felt that the Gita teaches us that what cannot be followed out in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion. Thus, according to the Gita, all acts that are incapable of being performed without attachment are taboo. This golden rule saves mankind from many a pitfall. According to this interpretation, murder, lying, dissoluteness and the like must be regarded as sinful and therefore taboo. Man's life then becomes simple, and from the simpleness springs peace.

Thinking along these lines, I have felt that in trying to enforce in one's own life the central teaching of the Gita, one is bound to follow Truth and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). When there

is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or *himsa*. Take any instance of untruth or violence, and it will be found that at its back was the desire to attain the cherished end. But it may be freely admitted that the Gita was not written to establish ahimsa. It was an accepted and primary duty even before the Gita age. The Gita had to deliver the message of renunciation of fruit. This is clearly brought out as early as the second chapter.

But if the Gita believed in ahimsa or it was included in desirelessness, why did the author take a warlike illustration? When the Gita was written, although people believed in ahimsa, wars were not only not taboo, but nobody observed the contradiction between them and ahimsa.

In assessing the implications of renunciation of fruit, we are not required to probe the mind of the author of the Gita as to his limitations of ahimsa and the like. Because a poet puts a particular truth before the world, it does not necessarily follow that he has known or worked out all its great consequences, or that having done so, he is able always to express them fully. In this perhaps lies the greatness of the poem and the poet. A poet's meaning is limitless. Like man, the meaning of great writings suffers evolution. On examining the history of languages, we notice that the meaning of important words has changed or expanded. This is true of the Gita. The author has himself extended the meanings of some of the current words. We are able to discover this even on a superficial exami-

nation. It is possible that, in the age prior to the Gita, offering of animals as sacrifice was permissible. But there is not a trace of it in the sacrifice in the Gita sense. In the Gita continuous concentration on God is the king of sacrifices. The third chapter seems to show that sacrifice chiefly means body-labor for service. The third and fourth chapters read together will give us other meanings for sacrifice, but never animal-sacrifice. Similarly has the meaning of the word *sannyasa* undergone, in the Gita, a transformation. The sannyasa of the Gita will not tolerate complete cessation of all activity. The sannyasa of the Gita is all work and yet no work. Thus the author of the Gita, by extending meanings of words, has taught us to imitate him. Let it be granted that according to the letter of the Gita it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit. But after forty years' unremitting endeavor fully to enforce the teaching of the Gita in my own life, I have, in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of ahimsa in every shape and form.

The Gita is not an aphoristic work; it is a great religious poem. The deeper you dive into it, the richer the meaning you get. It being meant for the people at large, there is pleasing repetition. With every age the important words will carry new and expanding meanings. But its central teaching will never vary. The seeker is at liberty to extract from this treasure any meaning he likes so as to enable him to enforce in his life the central teaching.

THE PATH FOR THIS AGE

*from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna**

There are innumerable pathways leading to the Ocean of Immortality. The essential thing is to reach the Ocean. There are the paths of jnana, of karma and of bhakti.

One can undoubtedly reach God by following the paths of jnana and karma, but they are very difficult paths. Bhaktiyoga is the religion for this age. But that does not mean that the lover of God will reach one goal and the philosopher and worker another. It means that if a person seeks the Knowledge of Brahman he can attain It by following the path of bhakti, too. God, who loves His devotee, can give him the Knowledge of Brahman if He so desires.

But the bhakta wants to realize the Personal God endowed with form and talk to Him. He seldom seeks the Knowledge of Brahman. But God, who does everything at His pleasure, can make His devotee the heir to His infinite glories if it pleases Him. He gives His devotee both the Love of God and the Knowledge of Brahman. If one is able somehow to reach Calcutta, one can see the *maidan* and the museum and other places too. The thing is how to reach Calcutta.

By realizing the Divine Mother of the Universe, you will get Knowledge as well as Devotion. You will get both. In bhava samadhi you will see the form of God, and in nirvikalpa samadhi you will realize Brahman, the Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. In nirvikalpa samadhi ego, name and form do not exist.

*Translated by Swmai Nikhilananda

ON RABINDRANATH TAGORE

by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty

The Tagore Centennial symbolizes the modern recognition of a great eastern poet who was able to make of his life a true epic. A sensitive conscience passionately devoted to freedom and service to his fellow men, an eager eye for beauty and an unfailing sense of intellectual balance characterized this literary artist.

He was able to achieve this harmony of human sympathy and rare craftsmanship because he did not start with a message or a philosophical system which he tried to work into esthetic form or a theory of action. His humanity came directly from his natural love for the earth, its people and its mystery.

Tagore was born in Calcutta at a time when Asia was beginning to develop a nationalism which was retaliatory toward the West. He grew up amid the tremendous pressures of the awakening of India's own culture and traditions, but he resisted anti-westernism just as he rejected an imitative role for India.

His patriotism had a spiritual perspective. Before he joined the national movement of his own province, Bengal, he had already rooted himself in the soil of humanity.

Rabindranath Tagore was reared in a large mansion occupied by the rich "joint-family" of the Tagores, where he felt lonely among elders and visitors. This loneliness was deepened by his mother's death when he was a small boy. He sought compensation mainly through

kinship with nature and spent much time observing the garden surrounding the Tagore home.

The stillness of tropical nights bright with stars, the blaze of noonday hours spoke to him; he cherished the monsoon season with its clouds and rain. These glimpses into earth-life gave to his poems and songs the genuine touch of the universal.

When Tagore was about twelve, he was taken by his father, the Maharshi, who was a scholar and religious reformer, to the Himalayan mountains, where they spent several months. There he was introduced to the grandeur of astronomy, which he studied at night with his father, and to the mighty mountain ranges. He felt the earth's outreaching toward the unknown universe.

These feelings were deeply involved in the growth of his poetic understanding and his identification with the people, especially the workers on the land, whom he saw toiling in the rice fields of Bengal. He came close to the fishermen in East Bengal, now East Pakistan, when he cruised the Padma river in his houseboat.

Rabindranath's education was what might be called "unconventional"—a mild term for the truancy which often kept him away from the classroom. He did not adjust to the transitional phase in India, when the schools lost touch not only with India's own culture and traditions but with the daily life of an awakening nation.

The family finally decided to send him to England, hoping that a study of law and English manners and customs would initiate him into

the life of a gentleman. He could then return home and join the tiny coterie of an educated bureaucracy.

But Tagore, then about seventeen, returned after a year. He had to know more about the civilization of the East before he could feel at ease in the western world. He realized that India and the West would always be on an uneven basis until India could evolve her own identity and until the western nations could accept the new Asia.

Tagore resumed his houseboat wanderings and gave himself to a life of literary work. This was one of the most creative periods of his life.

He wrote the poems of *Sonar Tari (The Golden Boat)*, a famous book of lyrics and odes; edited the literary journal *Sadhana,* contributing essays and short stories of his own; collected a large number of folk poems and folk songs from rural minstrels and market places, and discussed political and social problems in essays that stirred up the youth of Bengal.

Mainly in his prose writings, we can already trace a dual loyalty. He had to reconcile his faith in Indian independence with his faith in an interdependent mankind. His concern for India's welfare was matched by his increasing sense of responsibility to an emerging world order. But a fuller participation in international affairs was to come later.

In Rabindranath Tagore's literary career, he published more than fifty volumes of verse, a score of dramas, as many novels and a large number of essays on a variety of scientific, lit-

erary and social topics. He composed about three thousand songs, which in many ways were his greatest achievement. Millions of Indians sang his songs, often without knowing who was the author.

His songs glitter with lyric beauty and melodic nuances; they are delicate transcripts of nature and human moods, and, though based on classical Indian music, they are sometimes an ingenious blend of western harmony and eastern rhythms.

There were no dramatic incidents in Tagore's long life of eighty-one years. His tragedies were personal, such as the death of his wife when he was forty-one and the subsequent death, within a few years, of three of his children.

For his surviving son and daughter and for other children who needed the kind of creative education which he himself had missed, Tagore built up the school which he had started in 1901 shortly before his wife's death. Santiniketan (the Abode of Peace) was originally a spiritual retreat, dedicated by his father to religious meditation; Tagore rededicated it to education and culture with his father's consent.

There was no race or caste or religious discrimination in this school. It drew young and old from different parts of India, and soon there were students from other parts of Asia and from the West.

In this daily routine of teaching and administrating, Tagore found that his poems took on a firmer form and that his stories and dramas, instead of suffering from the lack of the so-

called ancient atmosphere of India, acquired more life because of Tagore's struggles with the problems both of rural India and of the larger world. He felt that his international center was somehow helping to find avenues to peace in the midst of preparations for a world-wide conflict between old and new nationalisms.

Just before World War I, poet Tagore made another visit to England, where he unexpectedly found himself recognized as a poet even through the medium of inadequate prose translations which he had made of his Bengali lyrics.

The publication of the slender volume, *Gitanjali,* led to a Nobel Prize award the following year, but much as he appreciated the kindness symbolized by this sudden fame aboard, he was embarrassed by the feeling that he was living on what he called "borrowed credit."

He was painfully aware that poetry cannot be translated. Nevertheless, a collection of love poems, *The Gardener;* a volume of children's poems, *The Crescent Moon,* and a delicate symbolical drama, *The Post Office,* enhanced his reputation. It waned, however, as more translations appeared, unedited and without background, introduction or chronology. Tagore was not responsible for this hasty publication, but he acknowledged his share of the blame by departing from the western literary scene.

But Rabindranath Tagore left his image of greatness and lofty personality in the minds of countless people all over the West, in the Latin countries and in Asia. When World War I descended upon mankind, he felt it as a grievous

crisis in his own life and accepted the arduous task of warning both West and East against the mechanization of civilization while he sought, at his educational center, to bring together scholars and humanists from many countries for creative collaboration.

Though he saw the League of Nations as a halting first step toward an international community, and though he was encouraged by the increasing exchanges of ideas and techniques between eastern and western peoples, he remained apprehensive to the end in regard to man's capacity to learn the lessons of history.

Toward the end of his days, we find Tagore using the medium of lines and colors depicting light and the discord of dark encounters in paintings of an abstract kind. Crazy rocks, inscrutable horizons and human faces brood in his colored sketches; glimpses of humor and hope find their way through irony and nonrepresentational art in his pictures. It is as if he were trying a new medium of communication after having felt the futility of mere words.

But, of course, he continued to write, even on his deathbed, and some of his terse last poems are among his best. His paintings, over two thousand in number, and his experiments in free verse reveal the power of his unwaning genius.

Though his agony at the renewal of war after less than twenty years was great, his final words, uttered in his poems, were that he could not afford to lose faith in humanity.

By the time he died, in August, 1941, his cultural center at Santiniketan had become an in-

tellectual and artistic institute, the rural education branch had been strengthened and international recognition had been given to its activities. It was given the full status of a university by Prime Minister Nehru soon after Tagore died.

While in the United States, Tagore had felt a special affinity for Robert Frost and had spoken about him in India. The Tagore Centennial celebrations here seem appropriate because of the friendliness between India's Poet and many of the finest artists and thinkers of this sister democracy.

It is hoped that this occasion will lead readers to explore Tagore anew, especially through the new collections of his writings now being offered to the American public. No greater tribute could be paid to a man of faith, who also had the daring of an artist, than a clear understanding and sharing of his generous sympathies and of the nature of his lifelong struggle against tyranny, both man-made and that born of "fatalism." He was a man of prayer, a seer, and he has left with us a divine vision of man which will continue to inspire mankind as we move toward spiritual light.

Dr Amiya Chakravarty, of Boston University, was at one time secretary to Rabindranath Tagore and his close associate. Dr. Chakravarty has recently published an anthology in commemoration of the Poet's Centennial entitled *A Tagore Reader.*

God is the infinite Existence. In Him there is neither East nor West, neither within nor without, neither above nor below. He permeates all space; He is woven warp and woof into all things. He is immanent, all-pervading — unaffected by forms or boundaries. He is all and He transcends all.

People quarrel over theories and dogmas of religion, but those who devote their lives to the attainment of the bliss of God, and know the Reality, have no quarrel with other faiths, nor do they antagonize them, for they speak the same tongue.

This kingdom (of Self) is never lost. Brahman is ever pure, ever free, self-luminous, and that Brahman is one's very Self. Just as a gold vessel may be covered with dirt, yet lose nothing of its true nature, so the true Self lies hidden within and remains forever unaffected by the dirt of ignorance covering it.

If you would know and enter into that kingdom, let the tongue tirelessly chant the name of God, let the heart and mind become absorbed in His meditation. Sooner or later, through His grace, you will surely know and enter into that blissful realm.

Be absorbed in meditation. Be absorbed so that the world becomes annihilated, and only you exist, you and the Beloved dwelling in your heart. As one becomes established in the meditative life there comes a control over the mind. Then alone can one know his own mind, how and in what devious ways it works.

To see a light in vision during meditation is not enough, though it is true that such a vision or any other vision serves to strengthen the faith, and encourage the aspirant to go deeper and deeper. Only when the physical consciousness is gone, when the heart becomes pure, can one really know that there is a deeper and vaster realm beyond the realm of spiritual visions.

A truly meditative man can be recognized by his movements, his face, his eyes. He has wonderful poise, his mind is tranquil. With eyes open or with eyes closed, engaged in whatever occupation, he meditates constantly and continuously. The current of thought flows unceasingly toward his Beloved. Just as a person suffering from acute toothache is constantly reminded of it, so is the aspirant constantly aware of the living Presence.

Now the more one practices spiritual disciplines, the nearer one moves toward the light of God, the purer one becomes in body and mind, and the more clearly will the evil impressions of one's many, many past lives be revealed. The "heat" produced by the practice of japam will draw them out, and that same heat will destroy them. The power of the Word is supreme.

No more will the mind be troubled by the restless waves of lust and craving; by the power of the Word the mind becomes pure, transformed, renewed. Upon the pure mind the power of God descends. Unto the pure heart Reality is revealed.

THE NEW CONTEXT OF JESUS

by David Grindell

On a spring day in 1947 a young Bedouin shepherd lad named Muhammed adh-Dhib was tending his flocks at Wadi Qumran among the hills that rise steep and stark over the brackish waters of the Dead Sea. One of his goats got lost and wandered into a cave. The boy threw some stones through the narrow entrance and, hearing that they gave a strange hollow sound, made his way into the cave. He found a jar containing a bundle wrapped in linen. In his boyish way he thought that he had found treasure and his family schemed with him to sell to wealthy merchants the ancient, unreadable manuscripts which the bundle held.

And treasure it was — but not of a kind these simple Bedouins could imagine! This and the sequel form the story of what we have come to call the *Dead Sea Scrolls.*

The learned world soon found out about them and made them the object of critical study. Conjectures and theories about date, authorship, significance and the like flew out in all directions like sparks from flint. This is not the place to examine them separately and to weigh them against one another; the prevailing opinion now is that these manuscripts belonged to a pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic sect, almost certainly Essenes, that they were written by scribes residing in a monastery, now in ruins, located less than a mile from the cave, and that they shed *some* light on the origins of Christianity.

But how much light? Will the findings prove revolutionary and possibly undermine the foundations of Christian faith? Let us return to our story.

In the United States, outside of professional circles, interest in the findings and their implications remained rather dormant, to be awakened suddenly and dramatically by an article of Edmund Wilson, which appeared in the May, 1955, issue of *New Yorker*. Wilson, mainly a writer and critic, was not known to be a specialist in any field which would make him competent to treat this subject and so the authorities attempted to pass him off as a mere dilettante. But Wilson, to give him his due, had done extensive reading and had consulted personally with several savants, notably Andre Dupont-Sommer, whose views he mainly followed. Furthermore he treated the subject with a vividness uncommon among scholars.

The thing that electrified and challenged was his thesis. "This monastery," he wrote, "this structure of stone that endures between the bitter waters and precipitous cliffs, with its oven and its inkwells, its mill and its cesspools, its constellation of sacred fonts, and the unadorned graves of its dead, is perhaps, more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity."

The so-called "squabble over the scrolls" had now begun, or at least in America, it was a matter of absorbing interest to wide segments of the public. It was even possible to say that "the most vigorous debate in Christianity since Darwin" was now in progress.

At the heart of it all is the conflict between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history, between the God-man in whom we seek to believe totally and unquestioningly and the religious genius of whom we want to know how he gained his exalted stature, whence he derived his sublime ideas. To be sure, this is a conflict which can be resolved in the mind of the individual and some writers on the subject have shown an admirable combination of critical attitude and reverent spirit. But the conflict persists and gives an animation to the whole problem.

Christians of traditional faith look upon the advent of the Lord as a supernatural event, willed by God and given through His grace in the fullness of time, surpassing in degree and kind all former revelations, bringing something quite new and unique into the world, breaking apart the ordinary frame of history, casting an unwonted beam of celestial radiance into this darkened vale of tears. Such a viewpoint tends to reject the findings of research. The Christians of liberal leanings, on the other hand, have welcomed the new insights as fitting together pieces of a great puzzle which now begins to show in an exciting way the environment of ideas, parties, books, customs and foreign influences in which Jesus must certainly, at some period of his youth, have been brought up. This general point of view, influenced by science and history, wants to understand what can be rationally understood and finds that which excites wonder and reverence in the contemplation of man's emergence into cultural, ethical and spir-

itual fruition, along what may be called natural lines.

So then, we may hope to explain some things about Jesus' background more fully than was possible before. Let us have no fear that we can take the great Prophet of Nazareth and *explain him away!* An army of scholars, working with findings more revealing and sensational than these at Wadi Qumran could scarely do that!

The best approach, I think, is to site the Essenes and Jesus within the whole development of the Jewish people. It was under Moses, the great prophet and law-giver, that the Jews became a *nation.* The earlier patriarchs, Abraham and the others, belonged to an era of Semitic origins. A second stage of development came with the line of prophets from Amos to Ezekiel; in a masterly way they developed the *ethical* precepts which are the proud patrimony of their people. Micah proclaimed:

> "It hath been shown thee, O man what
> is good,
> And what Yahweh doth demand of thee:
> Only to do justice and to love mercy
> And to walk humbly with thy God."

The later prophets of this group, roughly contemporary with Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tze and others, carry the development further: Jeremiah proclaims a new covenant of inwardness; the great unknown prophet of the exile known as the second Isaiah develops his concept of the Suffering Servant, which Jesus made part of

his own life; and Ezekiel, prophet, priest and visionary blazes the trail on to apocalypticism.

Around this time a third stage of development begins, a stage in which the Jews were to produce a world teacher and rise to a mystical consciousness. The letter was fulfilled most clearly in Philo of Alexandria, whose dates, about 20 B.C. to about A.D. 50, make him a contemporary of Jesus. Philo belongs in the band of such men as Plotinus, Eckhart or Shankara. His teaching is forthright, sublime and uncompromising. Jesus stands in the center of both these trends, but his teaching is veiled, suggestive and filled with, one might say, poetic overtones which reach into higher octaves.

This was because Jesus worked with, or in the idiom of, apocalyptic. His message was for the common people and he used parables which they might understand, each according to his measure.

So far as his Jewish background is concerned, Jesus arose out of prophecy and apocalyptic. In prophecy he is closely affiliated with the second Isaiah, who was highly venerated in the Qumran community as the abundance of his writings show. Jesus began his public ministry, indeed, by reading out in the synagogue a passage from Isaiah. His prophetic background accounts, in good measure, for the ethical side of his teaching.

The apocalyptic contribution enabled him to bring in a cautiously veiled and allegorized mysticism. What is apocalyptic? It is a complex

of beliefs holding that (1) a Messiah is to come and that he will (2) initiate a Kingdom of God, which will involve an end of the world, this to be associated with (3) a Last Judgment and (4) some kind of Resurrection for some to an eternal life. The order of these events might vary and there was divergence of opinion on all points. Much of this also goes by the name of eschatology, and eschatology has been seen in recent years as offering the master key to the whole of Jesus' world view.

Now it was precisely the Essenes, of all the parties among the Jews, who held most strongly to these ideas and the literature which expressed them was the *Books of Enoch.* These books, long recognized to have a sectarian character, originated somehow with the Essenes. They alone explain what Jesus must have meant when he used his favorite term to designate himself, "the Son of Man."

Again, did Jesus actually, and in a literal sense, hold that the world was to come to an end? We could hardly believe otherwise if we read the Gospels carefully, but that is to conclude that he was eminently mistaken. It is more likely that here again he was speaking in a figurative way, a way perhaps that even those who wanted to record his words failed to understand. This disappearance of the objective world was known to Ramana Maharshi; it comes about, he said, with the conquest of the ego. The technical term for it with him was *Drisya Vilaya.*

Here again is a case where we could come closer to Christ by a truer understanding of

apocalyptic, aided by insights from Indian spirituality.

John the Baptist was probably brought up with the Essenes; the very name "Baptist" or "Baptizer" may have meant little more than Essene in the idiom of that time. The ritual use of water was one of the most characteristic features of their worship. It is probable that John broke with them at a later period, possibly in the desire to bring their teachings and practices closer to the people. The Essenes at Qumran were monks in the strict sense of the word: they lived according to the ideals of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Jesus, too, very likely broke with the Essenes because their way of life isolated them too much from the common flock. In general, his connection with that order must have been intimate. The difference which some writers try to draw between his practices and views and theirs are much less wide than is commonly believed.

Paul the Apostle and John the author of the gospel also show a remarkable dependence in ideas and terminology on the doctrines of this sect.

The discovery of the scrolls is still relatively recent. Many more findings will be made. The picture of Jesus as a product of this fascinating world of the apocalyptic is still being completed.

When you know yourself, you know all.
—*Swami Vivekananda*

FROM AN INDIAN JOURNEY

by Astrid Setterwall Angstrom

(CONTINUED FROM THE SUMMER ISSUE)

Slowly we mount the hill at the end of the field. A boy and a girl with shy smiles on their thin faces are busy turning cow dung into flat cakes. Their arms are smeared with it right up to their elbows. Squatting on the ground they seem to have acquired its color so that they can hardly be distinguished from the turfs of the slope. On the crescent of the hill is a small shrine close to which a peepal tree grows. Under the tree a stone goddess is raised who is half human and half snake. On each side of the goddess is an erect stone on which is carved a stylized cobra, *Naga Karnika*. This is one of the oldest life-symbols in existence. Originally an egg of stone or gold was put under a tree. The egg was the symbol of the origin of the universe. The tree with its outstretched branches indicated the omnipresent cosmic Spirit. The carved stone snake was put up close to the egg. Its slithering movements symbolized the birth and rebirth of the human soul. There are many such small shrines on the hill. The original meaning has changed. Legends and tales have spun their threads. Nowadays women walk around the sculptured snake under the tree of life, and praying for children they put out bowls of milk for the snakes who live under the tree.

The red dust whirls in the wind, settles and seems to cover everything. When the boys play at marbles below the hill or when they run, the

soles of their feet shine light reddish-brown against their dark bodies. One of the boys gives a top performance. His movements are supple and quick and his voice is heard above the others. One moment he winds a turban around his head, the next moment his oily black hair glistens in the sun. In his joyous exuberance he is the born leader of the others. Some day he may continue to lead his contemporaries.

In the distance a streak of blue-green water is visible. Two women in cobalt blue saris squat on the sun-baked slope. Their cooking pots stand beside them. They seem so passive in their poverty, as if life around them had nothing to do with them, and so timeless, as if they had been sitting there for thousands of years. Dry leaves rustle in the breeze.

Below the slope is the cave-temple, Sri Gavigangadhareswara — the strangest temple we have seen until now. A number of women walk out of the temple compound. First comes a young mother carrying with pride her unborn child. Her garment is golden and around her brown ankles gleam two heavy rows of magnificent pearls. Jewels glitter in nose and ears. The other women in the group wear violet, emerald-green, shimmering blue and mustard-yellow saris — an orgy of colors against the red, sun-cracked earth. Above their heads, designed against the sky, the three-pointed fork of Siva is visible, surrounded by other stone symbols such as the half moon, the snake, the *damaru* — the drum — and the sun discs — all from very

remote times. Cut in the same rock as the temple, facing the inner shrine, lies Nandi, the bull that is Siva's vehicle.

The young temple-priest is a kind, sympathetic man. He wears the signs of Siva on his forehead — horizontal lines painted with ashes — and repeats a mantra. This ash is called *bhasma,* which means "that which is burnt." It says in Bhasma Upanishad, "I am this Absolute Brahman which through the consuming fire of the highest knowledge burns to ashes the ignorance that conceives of this body and this universe as real." The fragrant sandalwood spot between the eyebrows symbolizing Parvati signifies, according to a non-dualistic conception, the destructive universal power.

By the entrance to the inner shrine two stone figures that are to be found in every Siva temple —*dwarapalakas* — stand on guard. The whole zodiac is represented, Surya, the sun, Chandra, the moon, Neptune and all the others. Incense is burned and water is poured over the symbols. There is also a bronze statue of Siva as the dancing *Nataraja.* One cannot escape being fascinated by its cosmic concept, its intense movement and the almost unbelievable artistic skill it displays. The dancing god wraps himself in the tiger skin of human wrath and carries the slyness and ill will of men like a necklace. Under his feet he crushes the dwarf, the embodiment of evil. His dance is the dramatic expression of the cosmic process of creation, preservation and destruction, of illusion and illumination.

Siva is present in the cremation ground, in destructive happenings like floods, earthquakes and other catastrophes. Creation and destruction, good and evil, beauty and ugliness are to the Hindu conception equally divine. Siva manifests himself in fire, air, water and all living things. He is the Lord of the universe, its teacher and its deliverer. Siva is the god of renunciation, and through renunciation his devotees get liberation.

At the end of a cycle Siva destroys earth and sky. He also breaks the chains that bind every soul. The cremation grounds where he dances are human hearts where selfishness and illusions are burnt. In parts of India where the Mother is worshipped it is Kali, Siva's female aspect, who dances in hearts scorched by the fire of burning desires. This is a song to the dancing Mother:

"Because Thou lovest the burning-ground,
I have made a burning-ground of my heart —
That Thou — Dark One, haunter of the
burning-ground —
Mayest dance Thy eternal dance.
Naught else is within my heart, O Mother;
Day and night blazes the funeral pyre:
The ashes of the dead, strewn all about,
I have preserved against Thy coming.
With death-conquering Mahakala 'neath
Thy feet
Do Thou enter in, dancing Thy rhythmic
dance,
That I may behold Thee with closed eyes."

What overwhelming, cosmic imagination the ancient poets and artists of India had!

The cave curves far into the mountain. One cannot stand upright. In the flickering light of a torch carried by the priest his skin shines, damp from perspiration. There is hardly any oxygen left but we still have to proceed further in order to see the images of some ancient illumined rishis. At the side of the narrow passage stands the vehicle on which the images are placed in processions, drawn by shining metal elephants and bulls.

From outside, the temple is hardly visible. Ancient, strange, it opens like the earth itself. Inside the cave you sense a strong force that reaches you like the life power of the Indian soil. One of the legends of Siva represents him with mighty monumentality as the great yogi—the universe itself—merged in constant meditation. Siva is demanding. He requires purity of his devotees.

When we emerge into the sunlight again it is as if we come from very distant regions. And so we do. We come from a place of worship in use for milleniums. We have been touched by a force directed toward one aspect of Reality—not only as a sign of ashes between the eyebrows but as a dynamic power to sharpen our insight into the hidden life.

The dark women in their blue saris are still sitting on the slope. They have not moved. Will the India they represent remain? Will they go on sitting there sending out their children to collect cow dung; will they continue to live so

that the skeleton is seen through the skin and their stomachs are swollen from starvation?

* * *

Today is a festival day called Pongal. Schools and offices are closed. My friend, the tall brahmin, has time to devote his day to us and to bring us to his home. The sugar beets have been harvested. In the villages it is a grand day, time to begin life anew after the fulfillment of harvest. Old, used and cracked things are thrown away. Even the poorest must have a new garment.

As we cross the red highway we hear distant music, and there around the corner a tiny horse comes trotting along pulling a covered wagon with leaves from banana and palm trees. Beside the coachman a squatting man is playing the recorder. His cheeks swell as if he blows with all his force. Another man sitting under the cover handles the drum with great skill. Gay advertisements are painted on the outside of the wagon telling that tonight a religious drama will be performed in the village nearby.

Even in the town there is a feeling of celebration. The housewives cook special dishes. They adorn their houses both within and without with flags and green leaves. The brahmin brings us through planted streets to his own house on which he had written the word *swagatam* which means "welcome." In front of the entrance two auspicious mandalas are drawn in rice-flour. Padma herself, the mistress of the house, in lilac colored sari with pearls and diamonds receives us. She lightens the environment. She herself is

the most precious gem in the friendly little home we now enter.

In a corner of the dining room a cupboard has been turned into an altar. Before the portraits of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sri Ma are fresh flowers. In the courtyard a tulasi plant grows in a pot. Since ancient times the leaves of this humble bush have been used for religious rituals as well as for medicinal purposes. When the master and mistress of the house begin their day by saluting the image of their Chosen Ideal of God they place tulasi leaves in front of it, thereby offering them to the feet of God. From early morning to late evening daily life is directed toward God, constantly invoking His presence. God is treated as the honored guest of the home. Food and drink are offered on the altar and incense is burned there.

The tall brahmin shows us around in his small practical house. In the kitchen he points with pride to a stone slab and a stone roller for grinding spices, and to a hand mill installed on the floor. Stone Age tools! But still practical and in daily use. Ancient and new, past and present remain side by side in India. Nothing is discarded and labor in the home is looked upon as worship.

Today we have to take part of the good things they have. We are served two kinds of dishes; one is salty and heavily spiced, the other sweet. After that we get rice with nuts and raisins. Everything tastes good. This is a friendly home which now, for the first time, receives two westerners.

When it is time for *arati*—evening worship—we walk over to the ashrama. We stay in the open under the mango trees and listen in the fragrant evening to the singing that floats out in the stillness from the temple.

Maharaj calls us to the library. He asks Padma and Kamala—the two lotus flowers—to tell about the Sunday school for girls they have recently started. Their work will be run according to the same schedule as the boys'. These women have taken the initiative of acquainting the girls with the wisdom of the Gita and the Upanishads. They will also train them in gymnastics and games. Eagerly they undertook to collect means to rent a hall in the neighborhood. Maharaj encourages, gives advice and follows interestedly the enthusiastic voluntary work of his women disciples.

A Ramakrishna Ashrama is a hearth for the high ethical principles of India's ancient culture, according to which a zeal for disinterested work is needed, is demanded. God dwells in man, in the poor, in the sick, in the hateful, in the loving. To serve man is therefore to serve God. Thus the Hindu thinks.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Now, after having completed fifty years of service to the followers of Vedanta all around the world the *Message of the East* will appear in a different form in 1962.

On Sunday, October 1, after having conducted a service in Cohasset in memory of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, Gayatri Devi flew from New York City to Copenhagen, Denmark, on her way to India. Her trip was planned so that she could participate in the Gandhi birthday celebration of the Danish Indian Society on Monday evening, October 2. There were many noted members among the congregation of over one hundred before whom Gayatri Devi spoke on *The Worldwide Influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.* She spoke also on *Vedanta and Religion* at an informal gathering the next evening. After leaving Copenhagen Gayatri Devi spent a few days with friends in Stockholm and then flew to Paris where she visited the Centre Vedantique Ramakrichna in Gretz. While there she spoke at the center's regular Sunday meeting. After Paris the next stop was Frankfurt, Germany, where she was received with the loving attention of the devotees there. In Frankfurt she spoke again on Gandhi and Tagore, a lecture which was most enthusiastically received by the hundred and twenty or more who attended it.

On October 13, Gayatri Devi arrived in her motherland, in Bombay where she stayed at the Ramakrishna Mission. At the kind insistence of Swami Sambuddhananda she remained there for part of India's great Mother Festival during which time she spoke one evening before the women's group, Sarada Sangha, at their religious service. She was also invited to speak before a distinguished audience which had gath-

ered for an Interfaith Conference at the Mission.

During Gayatri Devi's absence from the United States the work of the two Ashramas is being carried on faithfully by the consecrated communities supported by the many devoted members who consider the retreats to be their spiritual home.

At both centers the annual Festival of the Divine Mother, the *Durga Puja,* was observed with prayerful spirit.

Kali Puja—the worship of the Dark Mother —fell on Tuesday, November 7. In the La Crescenta Ashrama the occasion was marked by an evening worship and all night meditation in the Temple where the devotees came and went during the night. This worship culminated on Thursday night in the ever popular *Deepali*— the Festival of Lights. Tapasi Devi gave an inspired talk in the beautiful, candlelit Temple.

This same feast was celebrated in Cohasset on Wednesday, November 8, with an offering in the Shrine and a candlelight service in the Temple which was attended by fifty or more persons.

Thanksgiving was observed at the two retreats in the traditional manner with public services on the theme of gratitude before flower, vegetable and fruit laden altars.

When Gayatri Devi returns to La Crescenta after the first of the year she brings with her Srimata Charushila Devi, founder and head of the Indian branch of the work. This will be a real home coming for Charushila Devi who many years ago began her spiritual life here under the guidance of her teacher, Swami Paramananda.

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